some cases, the MCI also conducts surprise inspections to verify complaints, clinical material, teaching faculty etc. in order to ensure the availability of facilities for medical education. According to MCI, out of 183 inspections conducted by MCI during the year 2006 till date, only 4 surprise inspections were conducted and secrecy was maintained uniformly in all these four cases.

Lack of rainfall

*277. SHRIMATI SYEDA ANWARA TAIMUR:
SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that lack of rainfall in the Northern States has become a concern as rice and other crops are likely to be affected; and

(b) if so, the action Government propose to take to tackle the situation?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) As per rainfall data reported by the India Meteorological Department (IMD), the cumulative seasonal rainfall in the Northern States from 1st June, 2006, till 2nd August, 2006 has been normal in Uttar Pradesh, Uttaranchal, Haryana, Punjab and Jammu & Kashmir. However, in Himachal Pradesh, the rainfall has been deficient by 22% of Long Period Average (LPA). Rainfall in a particular region/State with in the range of ±19% of LPA is considered as normal. Current monsoon/rainfall situation in the Northern States of the country is given in the following table:

Rainfall situation in northern States (1-6-2006 to 2-8-2006):

States	Normal (mm)	Actual (mm)	% Departure	Category
Uttar Pradesh	404.9	413.2	+2%	N
Uttaranchal	623.2	523.7	-16%	N
Haryana	223.5	198.0	-11%	N
Punjab	247.5	226.3	-9%	N
Himachal Pradesh	399.7	310.1	-22%	D
Jammu & Kashmir	262.2	269.1	+3%	N

Note: Normal (N):-19% to + 19% of LPA, Deficient (D):- 20% to -59% of LPA

As per the latest available information, the cumulative rainfall situation in the country as on 8.8.2006 has improved and the deficiency in the country as a whole as well as in north-west region has come down to 3% of LPA.

The crop area sown in kharif 2006 till 7.8.2006 under various crops in the Northern States is reported to be 164.3 lakh hectare as compared to the crop area of 163.4 lakh hectare sown during kharif 2005 till that date. In case of rice, the area sown in the Northern States was 82.3 lakh hectares during the kharif 2006 till 7.8.2006 as against 82.5 lakh hectares in kharif 2005 till that date.

(b) Government regularly reviews the crop weather situation in the country through weekly Crop Weather Watch Group Meetings held in the Ministry of Agriculture to take suitable action, as and when required.

Joint venture projects of Railways

*278. SHRI B.J. PANDA: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Railways propose to enter into joint ventures with various States for different rail projects;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the details of such projects which are located in Orissa?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI LALU PRASAD): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Ministry of Railways had formed Joint Ventures in participation with State Governments for implementation of rail infrastructure projects in Maharashtra, Karnataka and Gujarat. Rail Vikas Nigam Ltd (RVNL) has further proposed implementation of certain port connectivity projects through Joint Ventures, where State Government is also one of the stake-holders.

(c) Haridaspur-Paradip New Line Project in Orissa costing Rs. 594 crores has been proposed by RVNL for implementation in participation with Government of Orissa and other strategic partners.